



## **Sustainable Fisheries**

The ocean plays a vital role in the global economy by providing food and a source of income for millions of people. More than 50 million people work in the fishing and aquaculture sector, many in small-scale fisheries that are critical to the economies of their communities. More than three billion people, many of whom live in the poorest and least developed countries, rely on food from the ocean as a significant source of protein, highlighting the role of marine species in food security worldwide.

### **The Challenges**

The oceans face serious challenges that threaten the sustainability of marine fisheries. Catches of many types of fish in the ocean are declining while demand continues to increase. Based on data reported in 2014 by the Food and Agriculture Organization, an estimated 29 percent of the world's fish stocks for which reasonable information exists are overexploited, while another 61 percent cannot support expanded harvest and require effective management and related measures to avoid decline. Individual nations manage many fisheries; in other cases groups of nations must manage fisheries collaboratively. Unfortunately, existing mechanisms for international management of fisheries have produced mixed results.

Overfishing harms the ecology of the ocean, while also reducing the long-term potential of fish stocks to provide food and jobs for the future. Harmful fishing practices have unintended impacts on species of birds, marine mammals, sea turtles and non-target fish stocks. The scientific data needed for managing certain fish stocks are often not available, due to inadequate funding or poor reporting of fisheries data. Even where good scientific information is available, management decisions do not always follow it. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing further undermines fisheries management worldwide, particularly in developing countries. Harmful fisheries subsidies that encourage overfishing or contribute to excess capacity of fishing fleets also undermine the effectiveness of fisheries management regimes.

### **Steps Forward**

The Our Ocean conference will examine the steps fishery management authorities need to take to reduce, and ultimately end, overfishing and to mitigate adverse impacts on the broader marine environment. For fisheries shared by two or more nations, conference participants can consider ways to improve the outcomes achieved through regional fisheries management organizations, including setting fisheries rules on the basis of sound science, monitoring fishing activity using all available

tools, enforcing meaningful penalties on violators and building capacity for developing nations to fulfill their commitments in this field.

But improved fisheries management alone will not end threats to the sustainability of marine fisheries. Governments, the private sector, civil society, and ordinary citizens must all do their part. Building on earlier events in 2014, the Our Ocean conference is designed to spur action among all these entities, support and strengthen existing partnerships, create new collaborations, and develop new technologies to produce sustainable marine fisheries.

An active media outreach effort, including a social media “Call to Action”, is raising public awareness of the need to protect the ocean and give ordinary citizens a way to contribute. Private sector and civil society participants will describe initiatives underway to safeguard the ocean’s health, and build bridges that will empower future collaboration. The conference will also provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to discuss and unite behind a set of common sense understandings to protect and restore the ocean’s health that can then be taken forward in the media, civil society initiatives, and diplomatic processes. With respect to sustainable fisheries, these understandings could include:

- Ending overfishing in the ocean
- Eliminating harmful fisheries subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity of fishing fleets
- Preventing illegally harvested fish from entering commerce, including by bringing the Port State Measures Agreement into force promptly
- Using “smarter” fishing gear and techniques to radically reduce bycatch and discards of fish and the harm that certain gear and techniques cause to vulnerable marine ecosystems
- Establishing more marine protected areas, particularly in areas that will promote recovery of depleted fish stocks
- Using market incentives to promote sustainable fisheries, including efforts to enable consumers to choose seafood that has been sustainably harvested
- Treating fish as essential components of ocean ecosystems and managing fisheries as part of those ecosystems